

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 16, 2018

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member Bishop,

We would like to thank the Members of the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee for their continued support of vital water infrastructure and technical assistance funding for rural and small communities through programs under the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). As the subcommittee moves forward with the consideration of agriculture appropriations for fiscal year (FY) 2019, we write to respectfully request the following funding levels:

USDA Water and Sewer Loan and Grant program: at least **\$600 million**

USDA Circuit Rider program: at least **\$18 million**

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Grassroots Source Water Protection program: at least **\$6.5 million**

Small and rural communities have an important public responsibility of complying with all applicable federal Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act regulations in order to supply the public with safe drinking water and sanitation. Most U.S. water utilities are small; over 91 percent of the country's 50,259 drinking water systems serve communities with fewer than 10,000 people and approximately 80 percent of the country's over 16,000 wastewater systems serve fewer than 10,000 people. Unfortunately, due to limited economies of scale and lack of technical expertise, small and rural communities often have difficulty complying with federal mandates. Collectively, the USDA Water and Sewer Loan and Grant program, the USDA Circuit Rider program and the FSA Grassroots Source Water Protection program are essential in helping small and rural communities overcome their limitations in providing safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation.

The USDA Water and Sewer Loan and Grant program helps to construct water and wastewater infrastructure through grants and loans provided at reasonable rates and terms. The current backlog for the USDA Water and Sewer Loan and Grant program is approximately \$3 billion. This backlog represents small and rural community water infrastructure projects that are unable to access alternative sources of funding. Without this assistance, many communities would not have the means to construct new water systems, expand existing systems, or comply

with federal mandates. Thus, we respectfully urge the subcommittee to include \$600 million in the FY 2018 appropriations for the USDA Water and Sewer Loan and Grant program to address the current USDA backlog.

The USDA Circuit Rider program is a hugely successful USDA local initiative that uses appropriated funds to provide the necessary technical expertise and training to rural communities. This program provides the primary support for communities to operate safe and clean drinking water systems and helps to ensure compliance with current water regulations. Circuit riders are in the field every day helping these communities with water system compliance, operations, maintenance, management, and training. This assistance protects the federal government's sizable investment in rural water infrastructure. We respectfully request the USDA Circuit Rider program to be funded at a minimum of \$18.0 million to continue maintaining the number of full-time employees necessary to fulfill the important mission of this program.

The FSA Grassroots Source Water Protection Program provides our rural communities with the technical assistance necessary to improve water quality and provide safe drinking water. The source water program provides each state with one full-time staff member to coordinate and assist our rural communities in the implementation of source water protection plans. Without adequate funding for the FSA Grassroots Source Water Protection program, water quality in rural communities across the nation will be at risk. Thus, we respectfully request that the subcommittee continue funding this program at \$6.5 million.

State rural water associations have continually utilized the resources provided under these programs to serve millions of Americans across the nation, including the U.S. territories. Failure to fund these programs at the requested levels will cause irreparable and long lasting harm to community water systems throughout the U.S. and the Americans who rely upon them. We appreciate your consideration and your immediate attention to these programs.

Sincerely,



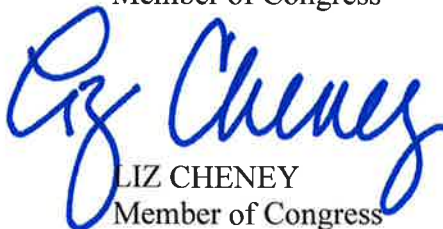
COLLEEN HANABUSA
Member of Congress



JOHN KATKO
Member of Congress



RICK LARSEN
Member of Congress



LIZ CHENEY
Member of Congress



PAUL D. TONKO
Member of Congress



DAVID B. MCKINLEY, P.E.
Member of Congress



PETER DEFAZIO
Member of Congress



DAVID ROUZER
Member of Congress



ALCEE L. HASTINGS
Member of Congress



JOHN J. FASO
Member of Congress



GWEN MOORE
Member of Congress



JACK BERGMAN
Member of Congress



PETER WELCH
Member of Congress



CLAUDIA TENNEY
Member of Congress



DAVE LOEBSACK
Member of Congress



FRANK A. LOBIONDO
Member of Congress



TERRI SEWELL
Member of Congress

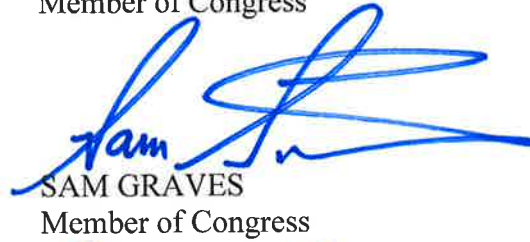


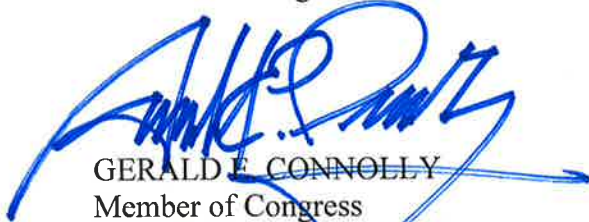
RICK CRAWFORD
Member of Congress


JERRY MCNERNEY
Member of Congress


WALTER B. JONES
Member of Congress


SETH MOULTON
Member of Congress


SAM GRAVES
Member of Congress


GERALD E. CONNOLLY
Member of Congress


GREGG HARPER
Member of Congress


KEITH ELLISON
Member of Congress


VICKY HARTZLER
Member of Congress


MICHAEL E. CAPUANO
Member of Congress


CHRIS COLLINS
Member of Congress


MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO
Member of Congress


STEVE PEARCE
Member of Congress


JOHN GARAMENDI
Member of Congress


NIKI TSONGAS
Member of Congress



DANIEL T. KILDEE
Member of Congress



JAMES R. MCGOVERN
Member of Congress



TIM WALZ
Member of Congress



JOSH GOTTHEIMER
Member of Congress



JOSEPH P. KENNEDY III
Member of Congress



JAMIE RASKIN
Member of Congress



RON KIND
Member of Congress



DONALD M. PAYNE JR.
Member of Congress



MARK DESAULNIER
Member of Congress



CAROL SHEA-PORTER
Member of Congress



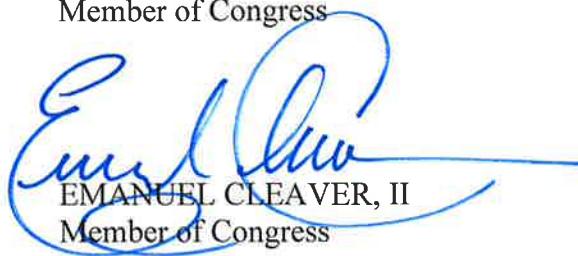
SUZAN K. DELBENE
Member of Congress



DENNY HECK
Member of Congress



ROBIN L. KELLY
Member of Congress



EMANUEL CLEAVER, II
Member of Congress



FILEMON VELA
Member of Congress



JACKY ROSEN
Member of Congress



RICHARD M. NOLAN
Member of Congress



ALMA S. ADAMS
Member of Congress



MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM
Member of Congress



BENNIE G. THOMPSON
Member of Congress



LUIS V. GUTIERREZ
Member of Congress



TOM O'HALLERAN
Member of Congress



RUBEN J. KIHUEN
Member of Congress



AL LAWSON
Member of Congress



G.K. BUTTERFIELD
Member of Congress



BRENDA L. LAWRENCE
Member of Congress



DARREN SOTO
Member of Congress



TULSI GABBARD
Member of Congress



CHERI BUSTOS
Member of Congress



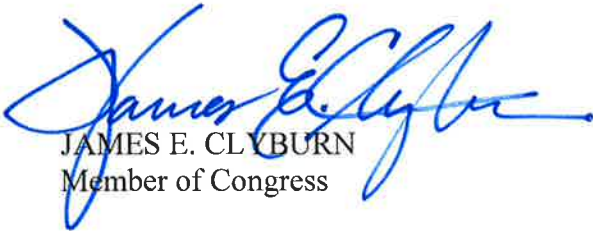
GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLAN
Member of Congress



ANN MCLANE KUSTER
Member of Congress



SHEILA JACKSON LEE
Member of Congress



JAMES E. CLYBURN
Member of Congress



LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER
Member of Congress



BEN RAY LUJÁN
Member of Congress



JIM COSTA
Member of Congress



SEAN PATRICK MALONEY
Member of Congress



STEPHEN L. LYNCH
Member of Congress



DIANA DEGETTE
Member of Congress



ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Member of Congress



COLLIN C. PETERSON
Member of Congress



CEDRIC L. RICHMOND
Member of Congress



STACEY E. PLASKETT
Member of Congress



WILLIAM R. KEATING
Member of Congress



PRAMILA JAYAPAL
Member of Congress



A. DONALD McEACHIN
Member of Congress



ELISE STEFANIK
Member of Congress



TRENT KELLY
Member of Congress